GRENADE ATTACK ON ISTANBUL SHUL LEAVES ONE WOUNDED BUT NO DAMAGE
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, March 1 (JTA) -- Two unidentified assailants hurled hand grenades Sunday at Istanbul's Neve Shalom Synagogue, slightly injuring a blind man in the vicinity, according to reports from Turkey.

One of the attackers was captured, reported ly by passersby, and another got away.

There was no damage to the synagogue, which was the target of a terrorist attack in September 1986.

In that incident, two disguised Arabs believed to have been members of the Abu Nidal terrorist group sprayed machine-gun fire and detonated grenades, killing 22 Sabbath worshippers and themselves.

No group affiliation or motive has yet been claimed for Sunday's attack, which took place just before a delegation from the World Sephardi Federation arrived in the country for a two-day visit to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews in Turkey.

The police chief in Istanbul confirmed that one of the assailants was captured, "but declined to make any comment about his whereabouts or identity," said Sammy Cohen, a journalist in Istanbul, who was reached by telephone.

Turkish police normally do not comment on incidents of this type until initial investigations are completed, Cohen explained.

Since the 1986 attack, the worst-ever on Jews in Turkey, the synagogue has been "very heavily guarded," Cohen said.

It was "thanks to the measures since then that nothing has happened to the temple itself," he said.

Window Shattered Nearby
One of the two grenades thrown exploded in front of the synagogue, but there was no damage.

Cohen described the man who was slightly injured as a blind passerby who was hit by flying glass from a nearby shop window, which shattered from the force of the grenade explosion.

Cohen described the man's light wounds as facial, although another report said the man sustained a foot injury.

The Anatolian news agency described the wounded person as a blind beggar named Mordi Yendi.

The attack was described as "an assault not only on Jews but on the values and standards of civilization itself," by Andre Sassoon, co-president of the International Jewish Committee for Sepharad '92, which was formed to commemorate the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492 and their resettlement in other countries.

Sassoon recalled the warm welcome given the Jews "only 500 years ago by Sultan Bayazit II of the Ottoman Empire."

"We have every confidence that the leaders of the Turkish government, who will be honored Monday in Ankara" by the World Sephardi delegation, "will act swiftly and effectively to bring the criminals to justice -- and to intensify their efforts to prevent acts of this kind in the future," Sassoon said.

AT LEAST 23 KILLED IN AN AVALANCHE THAT DESTROYS JERUSALEM COFFEEHOUSE
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- Arabs and Jews worked shoulder to shoulder in a 24-hour rescue operation that ended Sunday afternoon with the removal of at least 23 dead and 22 injured from an Arab coffeehouse in East Jerusalem that was buried under a mudslide Saturday.

But the human solidarity shown in the face of tragedy did not last. Some Arabs objected to victims being taken to Jewish hospitals in western Jerusalem. Some ambulances were stoned.

The disaster occurred Saturday afternoon, when the roof of the A-Rawda Cafe on Sultan Suleiman Street in East Jerusalem collapsed suddenly under the weight of accumulated snow, mud and debris that breached the stone retaining wall of an adjacent cemetery.

The tragedy was attributed to the record snowstorm that blanketed Jerusalem last week, reputedly the worst in more than a century.

Civil defense and army rescue teams went to work removing stone blocks from the wrecked cemetery walls, whose weight crushed the cafe roof like an avalanche.

Local Arabs pitched in without question or discussion as the muezzin on a nearby mosque called the faithful to prayers and ambulances carrying the injured raced from the scene.

The cries of pain and fear were heard at first. But as the last survivor was removed, silence fell.

A Dispute Over Hospitals
Relatives of the victims who had tried vainly to remove rubble themselves stood behind police barriers praying for miracles.

Only Abed Saleima, son of the proprietor, could claim one. Shortly before 5 p.m. Saturday, his father sent him outside to check on a noise.

He had only just walked out when hundreds of tons of mud and stones poured down on the 50 people believed to be inside the 55-year-old building at the time. Saleima saw his father's body pulled out hours later.

Rescue teams of Jews and Arabs worked through the night and the following day. But their common objective was not enough to overcome years ofanimosity.

The families of some victims, supported by Arab doctors, tried to prevent Red Magen David ambulances from taking the injured to Israeli hospitals, like the specially equipped emergency room of Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem.

The families wanted them treated at Mo kassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, an Arab hospital not as well equipped.

"They are fighting a war of politics and honor," said MDA official Ran Zehavi, "while we are fighting the war of the wounded."

As the rescue teams were at work, three Israeli vehicles were set on fire in nearby streets. The Israeli rescue teams were stoned from the Old City walls as they left the disaster site.

President Chaim Herzog and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir sent messages of condolences to Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem to convey to the families of the dead and injured.
ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WILL COMPENSATE HOMEOWNERS, FARMERS FOR STORM DAMAGE
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- The Israeli Cabinet agreed unanimously Sunday that the government will compensate homeowners and farmers for property damage caused by the record snowfalls and flooding last week.

Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i promised that claims would be processed and payments made as quickly as possible with minimum bureaucratic delays.

Television newsreel coverage over the weekend gave viewers a glimpse of the severe damage caused by the winter storm that swept over Israel last Monday and Tuesday. Meteorologists said it was the worst recorded in this century.

Farmers, especially in northern Israel, suffered huge losses of livestock and crops ruined by blizzard conditions and frigid temperatures.

The Haifa Bay area was especially hard hit when the Kishon River overflowed its banks, inundating large agricultural, industrial and residential regions.

Farm damage claims were supported by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. He has been acting agriculture minister since that minister, Raphael Eitan, resigned in January and pulled his Tsomet faction out of the government coalition.

Meanwhile, the bodies of two Bedouin teenagers missing since Feb. 24 were found Sunday in a wadi near their homes in the seaside village of Jisr ez-Zerka.

The bodies of the youths, who were cousins, were wedged under a bridge. They are believed to have been drowned in a flash flood while herding sheep when a severe winter storm struck Israel last Monday.

They became the objects of a widespread search after their flock wandered home unattended.

MORTAR FIRED AT IDF IN LEBANON BREAKS NINE-DAY LULL IN COMBAT
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- Two mortar shells were fired at an Israeli Defense Force outpost at the edge of the southern Lebanese security zone Sunday, causing no casualties.

The IDF responded with what it described as "controlled counterfiring."

The exchange broke a nine-day lull in fighting along the northern border, which began with an undeclared truce on Feb. 21 between the IDF and the Shi'ite fundamentalist militia, Hezbollah.

Hezbollah had been firing Katyusha rockets into Upper Galilee since Feb. 16 in retaliation for the assassination of its leader, Sheik Abbas Musawi, for which Israel took responsibility.

The IDF and its allied South Lebanon Army replied with artillery barrages aimed at knocking out the rocket-launching sites.

The IDF subsequently sent ground forces into southern Lebanon, supported by tanks and combat helicopters to search out and destroy the mobile launchers. It lost two soldiers in a raid on a Lebanese village believed to be a Hezbollah base. The IDF then withdrew.

The Israelis claimed that the mortars were fired Sunday to conceal the failure of Hezbollah's earlier Katyusha rocket attacks. Hezbollah spokesmen in Lebanon reportedly described the isolated firing as a "major battle against Israel."

ISRAEL HOLDING FATAH TERRORISTS WHO KILLED ISRAELIS 3 YEARS AGO
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- Security forces were reported Sunday to be holding three terrorists suspected of murdering Hebrew University Professor Menahem Stern and electronics technician Eli Amsalem in Jerusalem nearly three years ago, as part of their "initiation" into the Palestine Liberation Organization's Al Fatah wing.

Stern, one of Israel's most distinguished academicians, was stabbed to death in broad daylight during the morning of June 22, 1989, while walking from his home in the Rehavia neighborhood to the National Library on the campus in Givat Ram. He was 64 at the time.

Amsalem, 39, was knifed to death a month later in his home in the Nahlaot neighborhood in downtown Jerusalem.

The three killers, reputed members of a Fatah cell, are also believed responsible for the murder of an Arab money-changer in the administered territories.

The suspects, whose ages range between 26 and 32, were not immediately identified. They reportedly told police they murdered Stern and Amsalem as a "test" for admission into Fatah.

Stern's murder shocked Israel and much of the academic world. Awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in history in 1977, the Polish-born professor was an expert on Hellenistic and Roman culture and on the period of the Second Temple.

Ironically, the police at the time of the murder discounted Palestinian nationalism as a motive because Arabs rarely frequented the area of western Jerusalem where it occurred. Stern's body was found in basheb near the Israel Museum.

MILLIONAIRE WHO ONCE SAT IN KNESSET CLAIMS POVERTY IN FRENCH FIRM'S SUIT
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- Shmuel Flatto-Sharon, a self-described millionaire when he fled to Israel more than 15 years ago to escape justice in France, claimed in court here Friday that he was impoverished and subsisting on a Knesset pension and the help of friends.

If legally declared penniless, he could avoid paying a $35 million judgment awarded the French Company Parisienne de Participation, which sued him in Israel.

Flatto-Sharon signed a declaration in Tel Aviv District Court applying for pauper's status.

"My economic and monetary situation is quite bad. I have no property. I exist on a modest pension as a former Knesset member and with financial assistance from various friends and acquaintances," his statement said.

Flatto-Sharon nevertheless occupies a luxurious villa in the upscale Savoy suburb of Tel Aviv, reportedly registered in his wife's name.

He was convicted in absentia in France for embezzlement and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

He evaded extradition by getting himself elected to the Knesset in 1977 as an independent candidate. But evidence of bribery and other illegal campaign activities surfaced and he was stripped of parliamentary immunity to stand trial.

Flatto-Sharon did not participate in the 1981 elections. He was subsequently convicted of buying votes and sentenced by a district court to serve time in prison.
AREN S AND SHARON BEAT LEVY FOR TOP SPOTS ON LIKUD LIST
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister David Levy is blaming a "plot" for his failure to win the No. 2 spot on the Likud elections list in a vote Sunday by the party's Central Committee.

Levy ended up third among the first seven names that will follow Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's on the Likud slate for the June 23 Knesset elections.

First place was taken by Defense Minister Moshe Arens, followed by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon.

According to Levy, the Shamir-Arens faction and the Sharon faction joined forces in the Central Committee to disqualify him for the post, Levy told reporters Sunday.

His allegations were denied. Shamir, moreover, insisted in an interview Sunday that the positions on the list were "not nearly as important as the party's membership seems to think."

The Likud leader said the Knesset ranking is not uppermost in his mind when it comes to appointing people to Cabinet posts.

Arens has long coveted the No. 2 spot on the Likud list, which is currently held by Levy, who has ranking as deputy prime minister.

Sharon, along with Levy, challenged Shamir for party leadership, bids both men lost decisively when the Central Committee picked its elections standard-bearer on Feb. 20.

Although Levy did notably better than Sharon in that contest, he was thwarted when the Central Committee reconvened last week to select its first 50 candidates. Levy ended up 18th, while Sharon came in fourth place.

Sunday's voting at the Tel Aviv Fair Grounds took place in a carnival atmosphere. About 90 percent of the more than 3,000 eligible voters participated.

The purpose was to arrange the candidates into seven groups of seven people each, in descending order.

Safe Spots For Women?

Following Arens, Sharon and Levy, the others in the first group of seven were Transport Minister Moshe Katsav, Deputy Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Knesset member Binyamin Begin and Police Minister Ronni Milo.

All were recommended by the Shamir-Arens camp for their respective slots.

Voting for the second group of seven was expected to last well into the night, and the rest of the slate was to be completed Monday.

Meanwhile, the Labor Party Central Committee got into a squabble Sunday as it prepared to vote on a proposal to ensure a minimum number of safe spots on its Knesset list for women.

Women are under-represented in both major parties. There are only two in Labor's 39-member delegation in the outgoing Knesset and one among Likud's 40 Knesset members.

But the proposal ran into opposition from Yitzhak Rabin, who was elected Labor Party chairman last month in the country's first primary election.

Rabin, in his maiden speech as party leader, maintained that setting aside a minimum number of spots for women would violate the spirit of open primaries.

In the end, he grudgingly agreed to some safe spots for women but insisted that the party's male leaders also be assured of election when Labor holds another primary later this month to choose its candidates for the next Knesset.

He was referring to his longtime rival Shimon Peres and his other recent challenger, Hista- drut Secretary-General Yisrael Kessar, both of whom he defeated in the primaries.

NIMRODI SELLS HALF THE SHARES OF MA'ARIV HE BOUGHT LAST WEEK
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- Israeli businessman and arms merchant Ya'acov Nimrodi, who only last week purchased a controlling interest in the afternoon daily Ma'ariv, has now sold half of those shares to Amos Schocken, publisher of the Israeli dailies Ha'aretz and Hadashot, and Australian-Jewish businessman Jack Lieberman.

Nimrodi, who on Feb. 23 acquired 87 percent of Ma'ariv shares from the estate of the late British media tycoon Robert Maxwell, informed the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange of the latest deal on Sunday.

His new partners each control 21.7 percent of the former Maxwell holdings to Nimrodi's 43.5 percent.

Nimrodi also reportedly agreed to assume the debts incurred by Ma'ariv during Maxwell's brief ownership, which have been estimated to be between $10 million and $50 million.

Schocken, meanwhile, appeared on Israel Radio to deny fears voiced by Ma'ariv and Hadashot staff members for their jobs. He said there were no plans at present to close Hadashot, an afternoon paper that is reported to be losing heavily.

But Schocken would not confirm or deny rumors that large-scale dismissals were likely at Ma'ariv and Hadashot as Ma'ariv girds for an all-out battle with its chief rival, Yediot Achronot.

Yediot Achronot has the largest circulation of any Israeli newspaper. Ma'ariv is second but lags far behind.

INTERNATIONAL PAPER INVESTS IN SCITEX
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 1 (JTA) -- Israel's business community is hailing the International Paper Co.'s announcement that it will buy 11 percent of Scitex, a high-technology Israeli photo-image printing company considered one of the leaders in the field.

The placement of $209 million price has been described here as the biggest-ever investment in Israel by an American company. Scitex stock, which is traded on Wall Street, rose $3 a share after the announcement Friday.

The deal gives Scitex valuable international connections and cash for expansion projects.

The company, one of Israel's business success stories, produces state-of-the-art transmission and printing systems which compare favorably with the best produced in the United States, Europe and Japan.

The major non-public shareholders in Scitex are the IDB Group, headed by Discount Investments and Clal. The deal with International Paper was signed by IDB Chairman Rafael Recanati.

International Paper is one of the largest U.S. companies, with an annual turnover of $16 billion. Its assets amount to about $6 billion, including forests all over the world.
BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
AMERICAN JEWRY STARTING TO REFOCUS ON POLITICS AT LOCAL AND STATE LEVELS
By Larry Vudelson

PORTLAND, Ore. (JTA) -- The American Jewish community, accustomed to meeting with White House officials and lobbying Capitol Hill, is starting to turn its attention back to neighborhood and statehouse politics.

"The Jewish community is best served in getting involved in the body politic of the country," said Steve Gutow, executive director of the advocacy partisan National Jewish Democratic Council.

"We're trying to get our people to work again in the grass roots of Democratic politics, to roll up their sleeves, to have a right to talk policy."

Gutow was one of several speakers addressing the message of grass-roots political action here at the recent plenum of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

With school boards discussing how to teach religion, state parties passing resolutions about the Middle East and fewer Jewish voters turning out at the polls, the organized Jewish community needs to pay more attention to its political back yard, NJCRAC delegates were told.

Four years ago, supporters of Israel failed to keep a call for Palestinian "self-determination" off the platform of the Washington state Democratic Party, though they succeeded elsewhere.

The fight illustrated the potential price of years of neglecting the political legwork of licking envelopes and pounding the pavement for the easy influence of writing checks, said Gutow.

He observed that only 6 percent of the delegates to the 1988 Democratic National Convention were Jewish, compared to as many as twice that two decades ago.

Challenge Of Staying Non-Partisan

Gutow has been taking his message on the road to local Jewish community relations councils, sharing it with Matthew Brooks, who heads the parallel Jewish group for the Republican Party, the National Jewish Coalition.

They have coupled their general encouragement of Jewish political involvement with specific advice on how to serve as delegates for the national party conventions this summer.

Speaking as a team, they help Jewish community relations councils and federations stick to their legal requirement of remaining non-partisan.

Focusing on civic education and voter registration is another legal political outlet for nonprofit groups. That tactic is credited with helping defeat David Duke's quest for the Louisiana governorship in November.

In both Missouri and Minnesota, the Jewish community recently sponsored workshops on how to vote in the state caucuses, which help nominate presidential candidates.

Still, in a Jewish community that still leans well to the left of center maintaining non-partisan parity can be tough.

Lynn Lyss, a vice chair of NJCRAC, described the recent experience in St. Louis, when the Jewish Community Relations Council there organized a workshop on political involvement and the presidential caucus system.

"Looking over the list, we suddenly panicked we weren't going to have any Republicans," she said. "We called some of our activists who are Republicans and got about 12" out of a total attendance of 75.

"For sure, the pro-Israel community faces a challenge within the Democratic Party, known there as the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party."

"We have a number of strong justice and peace coalitions already mailing out very strong anti-Israel stuff," said Ardis Wexler, assistant director of the Jewish Community Relations Council-Anti-Defamation League of Minnesota and the Dakotas. She organized two training sessions on how to participate in the March 3 state caucuses.

"The thrust is to get people through the caucus and shepherd through pro-Israel resolutions from the precinct level on up," she said.

'Have To Start Much Earlier'

But grass-roots politics, say its advocates, is about people as much as platform positions.

"Without being part of the infrastructure, we cannot have sustained power," said Star Sacks, who chairs the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix.

"Our mistake has been waiting until someone is running to Congress, and that's when we get to know who said Lyss of St. Louis. "We have to start much earlier."

The Jewish community can also increase its local political influence and access by providing candidates for city and county boards and commissions, suggested Barbara Simon, who handles community relations for the Jewish Federation of Portland, Ore.

Simon, until recently a staff assistant for county officials, said local governments are always seeking new people to sit on commissions.

"Write to the local politician, introduce yourself or your organization, indicate that you're anxious to become involved in civic affairs and want to help place people on boards and commissions," she advised.

In addition to giving the Jewish community representation in the public arena, "it broadens our perspective in the eyes of the community, indicating that we care about more than just Israel," said Simon.

On the national level, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America has undertaken a similar project of supplying interns to congressional offices, said David Luchins, vice president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and an assistant to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.).

'We All Want To Be Machers'

Seeking to explain why the Jewish community has been slow to come to grass-roots politics, Luchins suggested that Jewish political traditions are still heavily influenced by the Jewish experience in Europe prior to democratization.

"We're still fairly used to the norms of another society, where one elite is empowered to negotiate with another elite on our behalf," he said.

I. Robert Wolfson, executive director of the ADL/Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Omaha, suggested another reason: "We all want to be machers," or big shots, he said.

But he said that more recent Jewish practices augur hope for a change.

"People in this room are trained at surviving Jewish institutional politics," he said. "That's a great training ground for surviving other political endeavors."